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535 corresponding to the *Veluan Na-mbak* performed for the erection of a *ghamal* on Vao. *Welen* and *Veluan* are both variants in their respective islands of the ordinary word used for "to dance." As the proper name for a particular dance, however, the word is chiefly associated, in the form of *Welu*, with the district of Tasmant in South-West Santo, where a dance of this name (which unfortunately has nowhere been described) holds the same prominent position in the graded society ritual as *Taur* and its variants do in Malekula.[1] This is but one of the many instances of how in the Small Islands traits from a number of cultural districts overlap.

535 786 Returning to the Vao word *Na-mbak* and Atchin *Ni-mbek*, the only suggestion that I can make is that they are related to the Vao word *bak-bakean*, *mbagh-mbagh* [2] or *mbek-mbek*, used for a propitiatory gift made either to ancestors or to the living in order to obtain favour or to ward off revenge.[3] The corresponding word *pakapaka* is used in Mota for the gift made by a lover to his girl, and is therefore now used there as a synonym for extra-marital sexual intercourse. This gives, I think, the clue to the word as used for the dance, since one of the salient features accompanying the Atchin dance called *Welen Ni-mbek* is that of sexual licence in which the ordinary laws of exogamy are disregarded, and there is a very general promiscuity throughout the night while the dancing is taking place. It is probably for this reason that the corresponding dance in Wala is called *Melingen Ni-mbek*, the word *Melingen* meaning "a bed."

Significance of composite name.

The motives that appear from this comparative study to lie behind the Vao dance of *Taure* thus seem to be: honouring the dead, mourning (in the native sense) the death of the tusked boars that are about to be sacrificed, boasting of the virtues both of the boars and of the Maki-men who reared or traded for them, and (when combined in Low Maki with the word *Na-mbak*) sexual licence. The dance belongs, as we have seen, to the pre-Maki stratum of ritual more particularly connected with ghosts of the male members of the matrilineal line. Honouring the dead and the sacrifice of boars both form part of the re-birth ritual which is the essence of the Maki. The sexual licence involves a complex mixture of emotions. In the first place, it expresses the fertility aspect of the rite, closely connected with re-birth. In the second place, the fact that all the rules of exogamy are here broken is closely connected with legends

[1] Deacon, 3, pp. 477, 491. It is interesting to note that this word *Welu* turns up again far to the south, in Nguna, where a rite (probably a dance) of this name is performed in connexion with "the making of a sacred man." This rite includes the making of a new house, and, it is interesting to note, is connected with a belief in a "god of the land" called Sugbwe (Capell, 1, pp. 71-2), this being a form of the word Sukwe (see p. 219).

[2] See p. 437.

[3] The Atchin word *Ni-mbek* is not to be confused with its homonym *ni-mbek* meaning "banyan tree," which is *na-mbangge* in Vao.

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concerning the incest of most culture-heroes in the Small Islands, and in particular of Tokwewe, the founder of the present Vao Maki,[1] and expresses the supernatural power of the Maki-men to override earthly restrictions.[2] And in the third place, it must not be forgotten that these same Maki-men are about to enter into a period of seclusion and abstinence that for the least of them will last thirty days, and may last for as many as two or more years, so that the orgiastic outlet of the preceding weeks may be regarded as a necessary outlet, giving strength to bear the ensuing period of restraint.

I said at the outset that this dance represents many aspects that are obscure. The above description is the most accurate that I have been able to arrive at regarding the general ideology surrounding the dance, and represents a kind of composite picture drawn from various sources all over the group. My time in Vao was not long enough to allow me to verify how far each detail is applicable to this island, and it was not my good fortune in any of the islands to witness the dance myself.

Form of the dance. Descriptions by other writers from all parts of Malekula.

Regarding the form of the dance, all I can say is that it conforms to the general pattern of circular dances as already given in my brief description of the *Gong-Raising* dance, except that, like *Settling-Down*, it is more spectacular in that the guests do not remain stationary round the posts, but dance in an anti-clockwise direction round them while the Maki-men dance clockwise with torches between them and the outer circle of women.

Since this is the most spectacular of all the all-night dances, several writers have recorded their impressions of it as seen in different parts of Malekula. None of these accounts give the structure of the dance in any detail, but all agree in being overwhelmed by its wild beauty, and anyone interested in the study of dramatic effect for its own sake will be repaid for reading them. The first was written as long ago as the year 1895 by the late Admiral Boyle Somerville, who, when a lieutenant in H.M.S. *Dart*, engaged in survey work, happened to land on the island of Uripiv when the culminating act of a Maki was in progress. There was a terrific rain-storm, which in no way deterred either the natives from carrying out the rite or the young lieutenant from attempting to see it. He arrived just as the all-night dance was beginning, and gives an impressive, if at times facetious, account of the beginning of it, though the natives insisted on his leaving when the women began to appear, hinting at the sexual licence already mentioned.[3]

[1] See p. 283. [2] See p. 433.

[3] Somerville, pp. 198-200. Next day he was more successful, and his description of the rites leading up to the main sacrifice make interesting reading when compared with my own account from Vao. The date, 1895, which is not stated in the book, was kindly communicated to me by the admiral's brother, Colonel Cameron F. Somerville of Drishane House, Skibbereen, County Cork.